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THE

FAMILY PARTY.

THE
FAMILY PARTY.

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FAMILY PARTY.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

It is not the privilege of vulgar minds, to mark the line
between the friend and lover, and never step beyond.

LAVATER.

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THE
FAMILY PARTY.



THE BRITISH MUSEUM
AND THE
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NATURAL HISTORY

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FAMILY PARTY.

CHAP. I.

CONTAINS THE GENERAL OUTLINES
OF THE WORK.

IN a certain square not a hundred
miles from the Royal Exchange,
lived, (for we must not venture to write
in the present tense) a merchant, who,

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having

having acquired immense wealth by successful commerce, had the generosity to spend it in the happy accommodation of his family, the *primum mobile* of which, being a sister, to whom he considered himself under unspeakable obligations, she shall, according to her just claims to precedence, be the first introduced to our readers acquaintance.

Mrs. St. John, (this good lady's name) had, at an early period of her life, if not offended, at least greatly disappointed her brother, by marrying a man of so absurd a turn of mind, as to believe a captain in the militia, because born to a small paternal inheritance, and bred in idleness, was of a superior order of beings to the whole mercantile

mercantile race—notwithstanding society at large is so abundantly benefited by their exertions and enterprizes—no friendly intercourse could therefore exist between them—in consequence of which she found herself compelled to spend her days on a remote spot in the country, for though the noble captain spared no expence in his own fashionable appearance, and fashionable excursions—he did not think it necessary his wife should move in a higher sphere than that of a downright plodding domestic superintendant, your *bon vivants* abroad being frequently the worst of tyrants at home, nor were her children, from happening to be girls, held by him in better estimation; besides, what, he begged leave to

ask, on her once attempting to remonstrate, had the sister of a surly cit to expect, beyond what she enjoyed, for had she not the honor of being called by his name, and known for the wife of a gentleman wherever she was seen or heard of: under these auspices did she for many a tedious year live, and under these auspices she became a widow; and whilst her brother, whose affection for her was suspended, not extinguished, was casting about for some happy device to enlarge her provision without wounding her feelings—his more beloved wife died also, and left him in a state of indiscrivable disconsolation.

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The news of this event reaching Mrs. St. John in her solitude, before her brother was able, as he conceived due, to give her the melancholy information, she dispatched a letter of the kindest condolence to him on the occasion — lamented her situation and circumstances, which rendered it impossible for her to give him personal proofs of either her sincere sympathy for his loss, or the heartfelt contrition, she had long labored under, for having acted contrary to his wishes—but love was the cause, and to him who knew what it was to be tenderly attached, though not to the fascination she herself owned she had been, could both pity and pardon the mistaken conduct, of which love alone had been

the cause—concluding the whole with an offer of taking upon her, if it could in any degree be softening of his cares, the management of his household, and the guardianship of his children, and that he might be assured, her error in judgment would be found, much rather a valuable qualification than a disqualification for the task, where his children were concerned, as experience was ever more allowed to be the parent of wisdom. It is needless to add, that this offer was joyfully accepted by the poor merchant, after what has been already mentioned respecting this lady, who, over and above the attendance of a dozen servants, a coach and four at her command, an elegant villa to retire to when fatigued with
the

the splendor of the town residence, and the first masters in the kingdom for her daughters gratis, was rewarded by him with exhaustless liberality.

The fact indeed, that Mr. Lawrence, her worthy brother, who had adored his wife, and in despite of her mortifying procedure, loved his sister, finding the poignant distress into which he was plunged, infinitely mitigated by the attentions she voluntarily paid him, saw alone the merit of her attachment to him and his, without once advert-
ing to the self-advantages derived therefrom. The friend of his youth, together with an infant son, intended by him in a marriage with his daughter, to perpetuate an amity. Noth-

ing but the iron hand of death could have dissolved, were likewise in the mansions of eternity—so that no second source of consolation being open to him, Mrs. St. John rose daily, hourly, in her consequence to his tranquillity, in so much that when absent he was continually commending her, and was both relieved and revived when present, by her chearful conversation.

To do Mrs. St. John justice however, for we wish not to impeach, much less disprove, Mr. Pope's assertion, that

“ Passions, when selfish, if their means are fair,

“ Lift under reason, and deserve her care.”

she

she was, we must confess, intitled to the high encomiums bestowed upon her by her brother, for she was uniformly in his and the children's sight, a kind, a judicious, and an exemplary woman, nevertheless this very lady, so competent, not only to subdue every great vice, but to preserve the surface of her conduct from blemish, had, in common with two thirds of the human species, the misfortune to be enslaved by a little secret infirmity that maintained its footing in the heart, under the fair seeming of a harmless spark of self-love, though in reality neither better nor worse than the Hydra vanity—but so soothing were its whisperings, and so soft its impulses, she suspected not, that with all her

celebrated correctness of temper, she was ever more duped by this assiduously concealed inmate of her bosom.

Mr. Lawrence, who was all goodness, candor and sincerity, aspired to no higher happiness, as the young people grew up under his delighted eye, than to hear the public prints read by his eldest son at breakfast, with his sister's comments upon the several articles therein contained, whilst his daughter, his youngest son, and two, by him greatly admired nieces, sat in silent admiration of the wisdom and worth of her, who had wrought such miracles for the general felicity, as saving the merchant from dying, as every one predicted

predicted would be his fate, of a broken heart.

Olivia and Lydia St. John, (for the secret somewhat in their mother's breast had prompted her to bestow those pastoral christian names upon them) were such good girls, as to be perfectly sensible of the favors heaped on their heads by their generous uncle—and in the effusions of their gratitude, when *tête à tête* in their own chamber, pronounced him the best of men.

Though both these young ladies might be called handsome, they were so totally unlike each other, that the eldest Miss Olivia might have set for the portrait of a Juno, Miss Lydia,

for that of a Madona, nor was there one kindred feature in their mental character, as will appear hereafter.

Their mother, whose wish it was to keep them as little ignorant as possible of their personal perfections, dressed them plain and neat, but so far fashionable, as to bespeak them allied to her by blood, however inferior in every other particular, for having during her seclusion from the world, as she called it, by the ill-natured authority of her husband, contrived to make a world of her own, dividing her time between the family business, the education of her girls and reading novels, with a variety of which she had been privately supplied by a genteel and well-meaning

Miss Corvett

meaning neighbour, she gave herself credit for much intellectual cultivation, and for having performed the part of an able preceptor to her children; and here it was she had taught them to spell, speak, and read with very tolerable propriety, to play on, and sing to a fine toned guittar, presented her when young by her brother, and to adjust a celestial, as well as a terrestrial globe, to the solving of every common problem; on therefore, being transplanted from their rural situation, into the rich bed of their uncle's patronage and favor, they made rapid improvements in every branch of science, the elements of which, however rudely, they had received in the country—talked French
and:

and Italian, as it is deemed by unlettered parents when their offspring can ask and answer a few trifling questions in those polite languages—dressed like gentlewomen, and were, in short, *tout à fait*, what the world in the common acceptation of the word pronounces to be, very accomplished ladies.

But though masters can give lessons of fashion and ton, they must evermore leave their young pupils to acquire the practice, by circulating into high bred company, and as Mrs. St. John, with all her self-celebriety, had never been naturalized to any other climate, except in the days of her captivity, when she could not be said to exist

exist at all, than that on the east side of Temple Bar, the young ladies were taught graces of behavior in the morning, they were obliged to lay aside at noon and for the rest of the day, in order to bring themselves down to a comfortable line with their uncle and family, though their mother was perpetually calling upon them to remember the claims that good uncle had upon them to shew him something for his money—and your toes, Olivia—your shoulders, Lydia, with a succession of similar, &c's. were the objects of her constant observance and correction.

The good natured Mr. Lawrence, whose ultimate wish was to see the
young

young folks happy, was greatly pained by all these efforts to please him, for he could not bring himself to believe that such schooling and criticising was the method to render them so, yet such was his extreme delicacy with respect to his sisters feelings and privileges, that he would not hazard wounding her, even for his own satisfaction—and therefore, on these occasions only declared, that in his eyes, they were the best appearing, and best polished girls in the whole city of London.

As for his own daughter, though she could not be styled a beauty, according to Stern's definition, was much more, for her countenance was replete with

with animation of goodness—the various sensations it manifested, being of that amiable and winning kind which demonstrate an innocent and a benevolent heart.

Her mother's memory was revered by her, though her person was unremembered, and as the first grief she had ever known was beholding her father's irrestrainable tears, so next to him in her affection, stood the friend by whose happy exertions they had ceased to flow.

Her dear companions, Olivia and Lydia St. John, were conceived by her to be the most worthy and condescending girls upon earth, for they
were

were always waving their own claims to do her pleasure, and so good to her brothers as to make it their care to serve and oblige them—kind creatures—for the eldest of the young gentlemen, with a fine figure, had fifty thousand pounds, independent of his father—his brother, twelve hundred pounds per annum, left him by a medical gentleman that was his god-father—and not inferior, in outward merit to the best in the groupe, and they were moreover commanded by their mother, for reasons that perfectly corresponded with their own inclinations to do every thing to gain their attachment.

Mrs. St. John, as a stroke of sound policy, in order the more effectually

to

to keep her young friends to herself, whatever public place it was proposed they should visit, declared herself loudly, in favour of A FAMILY PARTY. The world, she said, was much changed since she was young, and such the unfortunate effects of boarding school education, that no blush was seen to beautify a modern cheek—and what was a woman, however lovely, when the fine edge of female modesty was taken off, but an object of the highest disapprobation. The errors of her own past conduct—errors that had separated her for years from her excellent brother, and laid the foundation of every evil she had experienced, originated solely from her mixing with people, whose pride and presumption incited

incited them to imagine—the man engaged in commerce must be both narrow minded and unbred—tenets, which she, from the folly and weakness of youth had unhappily imbibed, and which at a more rational period, she had learned to renounce, and deeply repent of. Mr. Lawrence was touched by this open testimony of his sister's kindness, and nodded his head to the children, as much as to say, do you not observe, there is no love lost between us.

But though Mrs. St. John had the address to gloss over her frailties, as she was pleased to call them, until they assumed the shape of actual virtues—she would never have been fully
and

and finally restored to her forfeited place in her brother's heart, if disagreement instead of harmony, had not marked her matrimonial choice, for a mistaken one—a disparity of sentiment with her imperious husband bringing her back to a unison with those of her brother, or at least, gave every colour to her report, and every sanction to his credulity, that such was the reality of the case. But to return to the lady's speech—as therefore, she said, from the before-mentioned premises, she was persuaded her niece and daughters had no hereditary vices, she was anxious to guard them against the contagion of fashionable ones; her nephews were now, she thanked Heaven, at an age to 'squire them to places
of

of polite resort of whatever kind, and it was her earnest desire to limit her connections to the small, but highly valued circle of her immediate relations.

Mr. Lawrence thought her a prodigy of wisdom and noble mindedness, and the young people well satisfied with the company of each other, without the least violence to their hearts, constituted her will, in this instance, their law.

The obtaining this great point—obtaining it with so much honor to herself—not as a piece of advice, which might have been unpleasing, or a sage suggestion, to excite the disagreeable

agreeable idea of a fether, where every idea of bondage might have a dangerous tendency, but as an act of self-devotion to the welfare and the happiness of the family, over which she presided, afforded her such triumph and exultation, as could not be sustained in her own breast, though it was alone intrusted to the ear of a long tried female friend, whom she had brought with her out of the country, and established in the house of her brother, in the character of a sub-governant to the five children.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

CHACUN A SON GOUT.

BUT of all the public places Mrs. St. John delighted to frequent, the debating club had the pre-eminence; for, at the debating club she would say there was food for the understanding. Conversation, indeed, she confessed, as Addison asserted, engendered thoughts, and kept the mind both profitably and pleasingly awake, but she was convinced no private conversation

sation whatever could teach such animated or such just discriminations of the true from the false pictures of life and mankind as those discussions pro and con—maintained with equal learning, genius and pleasantry, at debating clubs—from whence therefore she, herself, always returned, both delighted and edified.

Nay, to speak the whole matter of fact at once, so warm and great was the interest Mrs. St. John took in these assemblies, that she frequently contrived to have the pleasure of hearing questions of her own propounding handled in an able, not to say a flattering manner, but was never capable of holding the balance so justly in her

breast, on such occasions, as to allow any gentleman debator, to be either wise, liberal or well distinguishing, who happened candidly to investigate, in order, candidly to confute, or reprobate her favourite opinions.

She had always entertained a high notion of the judgment, penetration, taste, &c. &c. she was born with, and which she had taken no small pains, at every convenient opportunity, to improve and enlighten—but the fame acquired by her, under her brother's roof—where she reigned with despotic sway—and was certain of guiding and regulating her subjects at will, had so far increased her natural self-approbation, that she at length began to deem
her

her abilities little inferior to those of first rate estimation in the present times, artfully lifting the ancients into unmerited consequence, to countenance her reduction of the moderns to her own standard.

Mr. Lawrence encouraged her fancy for debating clubs, on a two-fold account; for, in the first place, it amused his sister abroad, and in the second, abundantly amused him at home, for he was certain of hearing a re-canvass altogether of the preceding evening, when seated in his easy chair, and smoaking his pipe after dinner, previous to their fallying forth in quest of new subject matter, under the benign auspices of their leader general,

Mrs. St. John, wherever it was her pleasure to take them.

Our readers must not, however, be uninformed, that, however conformable their behaviour or conduct, every separate individual of this, (as Mrs. St. John denominated the united relatives of herself and brother,) most respectable old English family, had separate, and with many of them, carefully concealed propensities.

Oliva, whose ambition was equal to her mother's vanity, loved to hear of heroes, and heroic actions, and her cousin Redman, the youngest of the Lawrences doated on the tragic muse. Lydia, whose imagination was as ro-
mantic

romantic as her name, enjoyed all those incidents and circumstances, by which the tender passions are interested, and Mr. Dennis Lawrence, the eldest son, divided his affections between benevolence and commerce. Miss Lawrence was pleased with drollery and sentiment, and Mrs. St. John, according to her own report, delighted in views of domestic harmony, friendship and happiness, each was therefore gratified and mortified by turns, for it was a dull, or a charming; an odious or an enchanting evening with them, in their private estimate, as the subject of debate accorded with, or was a discord to, their ideas and wishes, and to fill up the groupe, Mr. Lawrence, who might, with the most

critical propriety, he called a citizen of the world, was a compound, with due strainings and drawbacks altogether, but nature and reason being his never failing guides, he was the most constant in his likings and disliking of the whole family party.

Lydia's soft temper, however, for he perceived nothing of the romantic lengths it often carried her, rendered her his most pleasurable companion, and this the more particularly as he thought there was a similitude of mental constitution between her and his still painfully regretted wife; for tho' her worth and charms, he well knew, must never more return, he could not lose the remembrance that such things had
been,

been, she was therefore encouraged by him to visit him in his library, where none but his daughter and herself were admitted; for in this retirement it was, that he indulged his melancholy reflections on the days that were gone, and it was an interruption, that sat uneasy on his feelings, to behold any other person there except his chosen children.

Sometimes, when uncommonly softened, he would moreover, in these little private interviews, tell them the history of his first acquaintance with Mrs. Lawrence—the history of her perfections, and the history of his sorrows, and frequently starting aside from this melting subject, would

mention the merits of his long lost friend.—

We were bred up, he would say, at the same school, served our clerkships in the same 'compting-house, was the confident of each other's hopes and fears, and on the same day became happy husbands; and would conclude these hints with a promise, yet unperformed, of giving them one day to know how his Jessy was deprived of her little intended, as he had taught her lisping tongue to call him, before hope itself expired of ever seeing him again—then kissing them, bade them resume their lively amusements, for that he neither ought—or desired to hang weights upon their tender

tender minds, and only left one request with Lydia, to love her cousin, with a true sisterly affection.

Mrs. St. John, who was a great anticipator of improbable, as well as probable events, interpreted the words *true sisterly affection* on their being repeated to her, in a sense most agreeable to her schemes, for where indeed could her nephews chuse better than her Oliva and Lydia, for personal or intellectual accomplishments, and as for fortune, they had enough to make up the deficiency on the side of her girls; nor would her brother, she was certain, seek to reach beyond happiness for his children, and thus already in her mind's eye, beholding them

lady mayoreffes—she made it her business to watch every turn of feature, and every turn of expression, in order to discover the genuine bent of the young gentlemen's inclinations, but without success; and, her vanity was so hurt at being foiled by two novices, and striplings, whom she had superintended from their infancy, that she set them down, in her own mind, for either the most insensible, or the most artful of their sex. As for her daughters, she had not a doubt of possessing a clew to their hearts, and on this firm persuasion gave them credit for fifty little manœuverings in their conduct, in consequence of intimations received from her, which never once had entered their imagination; they had

had indeed learned a lesson from her so frequently documenting them, which she was as far from foreseeing as she was from intending them to learn, namely, to keep the door of their hearts, close shut, and of courses whatever was therein contained, from the knowledge of all their relations.

CHAP. III.

A FURTHER KNOWLEDGE OF THE
FAMILY PARTY.

MRS. St. John, as vanity must ever have its altar and its sacrifices, though she was, as we have already observed, guarded at all points before her brother and the young people, had the pleasure and relief of unbosoming herself with the utmost security to an humble friend, which friend was no other than the kind neighbour,

neighbour, who had largely contributed to enable her to sustain her matrimonial bondage, by helping her to books, that with her pliability of spirit, and warm imagination was the very next thing to giving her a personal participation of all the delights they described, and a friend that was now become a no less established, than a valuable member of her brother's household.

Mrs. Dickson was, in truth, Mrs. St. John's representative in many domestic regulations, and her co-operator in all, for being sent for with Mr. Lawrence's consent to aid his sister in bringing up his, and her little ones—she had entered so sincerely into the advancement

advancement of their happiness, and acquitted herself of all her undertakings with so much alacrity and kindness, as to render herself dear to every heart.

So unambitious, nevertheless, was this woman's nature, that she received as a favour, the due reward of her services—services that gold cannot purchase, or aught but gratitude repay, and so far did her mild and equal temper throw her into shade—that whilst every one was forward to extol her goodness—every one forgot her claims to consideration and respect, for she had a small independence left her by her husband, yet appeared in no other light to the public eye, than the favorite

rite servant of a lady—to whom, behind the curtain, she was the life, the soul, the repository of her most secret thoughts, and the source of her highest, retired satisfactions—from offering up daily incense, in the innocence, good nature and simplicity of her heart, at the shrine of Mrs. St. John's self-dedication—her toilet, at which Mrs. Dickson did her the favour to attend, in order partly to receive an account of all that passed within her mind, or was the mere fabrication of her fancy—in all which this faithful and easy companion, was much entertained.

It is, Dickson, she would sometimes say, by one of those untoward incidents which often happen in life,
that

that I should be sister to the only man on earth whose ample wealth, and princely spirit renders worthy my hand. You see my power over his mind—his tears are wiped away, and his conduct is just what I please to make it—and if, in a sisterly connexion, I am so resistless, what should I not have been placed in the character of a wife. I own to you, my dear Dickson, that for a husband he has not either the person or the intellectual endowments, a woman like myself could make choice of—but then his wealth—a lady mayorefs—do but think of that and marvel at my resignation to my destiny; for instead of universal claims, and boundless power, I now hold every thing by courtesy—and my daughters
—with

—with astonishment I see it, are so inattentive to their present advantages, that I much fear, they will let the iron grow cold on the anvil—I therefore tremble every time my nephews go out alone, though for the shortest period, lest they should return with their hearts in chains to some forward dowdy, that may take a lucky aim; for my part I have left nothing undone to promote the happiness of my relations—the offers, my good Dickson, to your knowledge I have refused, is it not wonderful;—Alderman Drinkwater, who died last year of a dropsy, he would have given worlds to obtain the honor of my fair hand—there would have been a coach and six for me, and the town is so wicked as to say

say my cruelty killed him ; again, Major Bounce, that we met, by accident, at Islington Spaw—how he followed, and fighed, and sued to win me—but no, I would not desert my charge, and so lost being a lady, for Sir Richard Bounce, his eldest brother, is since dead, and he of course, is become a Baronet : And then Mr. Silver Tongue, as my brother used to call him—the counsellor, who now bids fair to be a judge—how I treated him—for the ring, Dickson, had actually bought, and the day, at least in his own expectation, was fixed—when what did I, obdurate as I am, but cause it, (you must remember) to be reported I was gone to Scarborough—when slipping down to our villa—I congratulated

tulated myself so unceasingly upon my unshaken attachment to my brother, that I forgot to pity the distressed and disappointed lover; so grievous, nevertheless, was the distress and disappointment to his feelings that I am assured, he was not trusted alone by his friends with even a pair of garters in his chamber, for above three months afterwards; yet here you see I am to tell it, and though I would not to be thought vain, I will, for this once, add, with undiminished charms, notwithstanding every infernal deity on the poetical list were no doubt besought to blight and destroy them.—But, Dickson, we must not, when we are upon the chapter and verse of my conquest, fail to remember the
doctor

doctor—how laughable—for he followed me wherever I went, like my shadow, and would have renounced every earthly tie to satisfy me; that all his fortune, if I survived him, should be mine.—We will, however, talk no more of it at present, for it is an unending theme; but some day or other, when we have leisure, just for the amusement of the mind, I will read you the history of my bleeding laurels, as the prebend humourously called them; and yet I never was so handsome, at least I never thought myself so, cried she, (viewing her face in the glass) as my daughters, who you see pass away their first bloom, unnoticed and unknown—except by their cousins, who, from the nature
of

of their situations, are bound down to a kind of Hobson's choice, them or none—on my word these young fellows would have made admirable anti-deluvian lovers; when men took up half a century in considering whether they should declare their passion or not; and having declared, remained in quiet acquiescence with the fair one's delay of fifty years more, before she vouchsafed to promulgate her answer, a predicament, that would precisely suit Olivia and Lydia St. John; for readily would they have submitted to the observance of every etiquette of demur, or procrastination, that age or long life, and slow determining could have desired.

Yet

Yet Dickson, cried the lady, after a short pause, what is the list of lovers I can produce, to the multiplicity that have escaped my memory; fool that I was to burn the sonnets, and acrostics these features have given birth to—for they would have spoke the flattering attentions I have received, and which it would ill become me, perhaps, to recite; and then my conversation—often and often has it been exclaimed—good God, how she can talk—but I think, said she, lowering her voice, I hear my brother's foot, and these *feminalities* are all entirely between ourselves.

Mr. Lawrence tapped at the door and told her, he had a present for her,
just

just brought from on board an Indian — it was a set of beautiful dressing boxes; so beautiful that Mrs. St. John felt it incumbent on her to preserve her reputation with him, to shew she remembered he had a daughter.

I ought not to rob you of these, cried she, whilst her eyes sparkled with delight, they must be my nieces.—It will be time enough, replied Mr. Lawrence, for her to be mistress of them when you have done occupying them, so receive them now as my gift, and let them revert to Jessy as your legacy, if she survives you. You are profuse in kindness, I must tell you, brother, to me—adieu, said the merchant—and let me leave this truth with
you,

you, that was a balance to be struck of obligations between us—I should be found to owe you years, and to have claims upon you, merely for cockle shells.

He is a glorious friend, cried Mrs. St. John, as he shut the door, and so out strips my wishes in munificence, that I shall certainly be as rich as a nabobess, and the envy of all that know me—But pray Dickson make such an arrangement of my boxes as to do honor to my toilet, and let me ask you, by the way, when would either of my daughters, from the exercise of their understandings, personal merit being of no advantages here, have done as much as I have done for

myself in this single instance—not but Olivia has inherited a spark or two of her mother's genius, and will shine, I will be bound for her, with the best of them, when she comes to be lady mayorefs.

To own the feelings, however, Dickson, as I verily believe it, of human nature no woman can enjoy the eclat of a host of admirers in—her daughters train—it is so strong a memento of what she herself has been, and every skip Jack, now a days, is prompt to have his filly jest and impertinent sneer at the old lady who brings her tall girl forward into life, though it is a million to one the mother is the superior beauty of the two

—and might decently speaking, pass for her sister. I have, however, I dare believe, as little to complain of, of this kind, as any woman in the world, the shyness of Lydia and the respect of Olivia concealing their graces, and leaving me an ample space of action. But, Dickson, what is a blessing undisplayed; call in the girls and boys, and let them all be witnesses of my good fortune and consequence; and such is the affection, the gratitude they bear me, that they will conceive my brother could not have made a better disposition of his property.

Olivia, Lydia, and Jessy were with her in a moment, and were never weary of admiring the boxes, the in-
side

fide of which Mrs. St. John had not once thought to explore; Miss Lawrence, however, was less superficial in her observation; and having opened the one she had in her hands, cried, dear aunt, there is something in them more than you seem aware of; and what should that something on examining prove, but a twenty pound note wrapped up in India paper, in each of them, inscribed "to buy pins and other toilet appendages."

This last stroke of fraternal gallantry, had its full effect on Mrs. St. John's feelings; for elegant dress being considered by her, in like manner with elegant drapery in a portrait—a most striking, and of course

a most essential article; riches, as the *sine qua non* of female happiness, in this respect, was the ardent aspiration of her soul, and so well furnished was her wardrobe, from being thus imagined *passe par tout* to fame and admiration, as not to have disgraced a princess.

Not that we would be understood to mean by this assertion, any other characteristic of a princess's wardrobe, than wealth; taste in dress, (except in the mode of dressing her children) was a gift Heaven had not bestowed upon Mrs St. John; nor did she suspect her self-deficiency, however, whilst gold supplied the place of softer, and far more eligible decorations.

Olivia

Olivia retired in discontent from this scene—why her mother the perpetual object of Mr. Lawrence's bounty and liberality; if kindness and attention to his family could merit such rewards, she was not without her claims to remembrance; but he was blind to every one's conduct, where his sister was—and wherefore, because she had a manner of setting out her services for shew, she would not permit her children to practise; if, however, she supposed her children to be such dupes as not to see through and through all her finesse and fine management, she was much mistaken, at least where her daughter, Olivia, was concerned; to whose view every art she played off, was a transparency, and the

day might not be far distant, when the wheel of fortune, in its whirling round, would exalt those that were now at the bottom, and disdainfully overlook the pinnacle point: these private ebullitions brought her into the tea room, and to the presence of her uncle, when she cleared up with as much address, as her mamma could have done—professing her satisfaction in the happiness Mrs. St. John so apparently enjoyed from this new testimony of her brother's generosity.

The young gentlemen now returned from 'Change, where Dennis, the eldest, was not ashamed to appear every day, as his father's proxy—the proxy of a British merchant, but with
Redman

Redman the case was quite otherwise ; for while the necessity of his condition, as the son of a trader compelled him to mix with the money getting tribe ; his great soul soared above every plebian care or connection, and he blessed the gods for having made him so unlike his grovelling relations.

Olivia bid them fly to her mother's dressing room to feast their eyes as she had done, with the beauties, the splendor of an eastern toilet.

The gentlemen did as their cousin desired, and having beheld the finery, told their aunt they were happy to see it in her possession ; for that she de-

D 4 served

served diadems, if in their power to place them on her head.

She bid them be gone, you put me in danger; said she, smiling, the danger of becoming altogether the reverse of what you tell me I am; for such presents and such compliments, if I have an atom of vanity in my composition, must awaken it, and undo me; they laughing, left her, and left her, in her own opinion, more than woman, though perhaps not absolutely a divinity.

How agreeably these boys compliment, said she to Mrs. Dickson, but it was I that taught them, amongst the many other good lessons they have

have received from me, to win, to
sooth, to fix the heart.

And yet, Dickson, rejoined she,
sighing deeply, such is the perverseness,
or rather misfortune of my destiny,
that I pine in the midst of all
these gay possessions, with anxiety for
my childrens future establishment and
welfare, for I repeat to you again, they
are a couple of senseless chits—that
have no idea of taking fair advantage
of their enamoratos—and their enamoratos
from being in perfect security
respecting their admired dulcineas, are
as cold and stupid as themselves; in
so much, that I fear the utmost reachings
of my genius and talents will be
insufficient to infuse the necessary pro-

methean spark of fire to advance my wishes; let me then turn aside my head from this pile of elegance, for Dickson, Dickson, it flatters, it consoles me not; were I to die, and those who are formed of the porcelain clay of humanity, as Doctor Johnson calls it, to discriminate them from the coarse multitude, are not immortal; what would, what could become of the foolish creatures, notwithstanding they are the offspring of such a mother as I am.

Mrs. Dickson, who was, on all occasions, Mrs. St. John's echo, lamented with great pathos, the possibility of misfortune and disappointment of which, this last speech had
given

given her the idea; alas, alas, cried she, with all your wit, and with all your cleverness, madam, cannot you strike upon some remedy for such alarming ills. Mrs. St. John sighed, and shook her head; then for once, said Dickson, I think I have the advantage of you; the DEBATING CLUB, might not a proper, and a healing question be hit off at the DEBATING CLUB to bring matters into better train.

I thank you for the thought, cried Mrs. St. John, rapturously, yes, Dickson, I will draw up a question, and you shall get it properly conveyed, that shall lead down to arguments of so awakening and so interesting a na-

ture that these boys shall become sensible of the happiness within their power, and the girls of the self-reproach, unimproved opportunity will entail upon them for ever.

Mrs. St. John immediately set to work; and in a few hours, manufactured this home question,—“Whether a fortune in a wife was not far preferable to a fortune with a wife,” which she said she would accompany with private hints, for weaving into the body of the oration, as if growing naturally out of the subject of debate those things that were calculated to have the desired effect upon her daughters feelings.

Dickson

Dickson was in extacies—this, madam, cried she, clapping her hands together, will do, and let me alone for a private presentation of it.

CHAP. IV.

A VERY SHORT CHAPTER.

WHILST Dickson and Mrs. St. John were thus busily employed; Lydia and Jessy observing Mr. Lawrence in better spirits than usual, tripped after him to the library, and told

told him, they were come to claim his kind promise, of telling them all about the little husband Miss Lawrence had lost, for that he seemed that day as if he could tell it chearfully.

My children, replied he, beholding them a moment in silent tenderness; but you shall not be disappointed, I will try to recollect what passed with fortitude, and to relate them with firmness; so bring your stools and let us seat ourselves together.

You remember, my dears, I doubt not since you have remembered to ask for the ensuing particulars, how far I proceeded in our late conversations—

to

to the marriage, sir, replied Lydia, of yourself and friend.

Mr. Lawrence would not trust himself with a moment's preparation; so taking up his story at the point Lydia reminded him he had broke off, he thus proceeded.

The woman, your mother, my Jeffy, and Mrs. Lapelle, were united in friendship by every kind impulse, and every amiable sympathy, besides the additional tie of their husbands attachment.—But our roads through life, from this period became widely different—I continuing a British merchant and British citizen, and Mr. Lapelle going to Jamaica.

In

In vain did I intreat him to join his interests and destiny with mine; his reply was that he ardently wished to go abroad, that distance could in no degree affect such a friendship as ours; for though oceans on oceans rolled between us, it must be felt as lively and as strong by each party as if residing under the same roof—he therefore figured to himself a world of delights; when, on the accumulation of the little wealth he aspired to be master of, he should return to his native country, and obtain a villa next to mine; in order that our connections, our pleasures and our families might be one and the same, in every circumstance.

Mrs.

Mrs. Lapelle presented him before they left England, with a son—a lovely boy, which, out of compliment to me, was christened Dennis Lawrence; and I besought him to commit to me the care of his infancy; nor once think of exposing him at so tender an age, either to the dangers of the sea, or the shocks of an untried climate; a cruel fatality over-ruled all I urged; my complying, my kindest friend, in every other instance was in this obstinate and invincible. Should Heaven, he would on these occasions cry, bless you with a daughter, make me now a solemn promise, that from her dawn of reason, you will inculcate the love of our little Denis in her heart; that we may live to future ages, in the happiness
of

of our children—I mean, preventing my reply, continued he, with their own free consent, and election, but let me, at the same time, add, that hardly endured by me would be the disappointment, if I find myself the parent of so degenerate a son, as to be capable of preferring any human being to the daughter of Mr. Lawrence; unless it should be possible for her to be an alien to her father's virtues; tell her then daily, hourly, should the choice gift of a female child be ever yours, that there is a little husband ready for her, though in another section of the globe, at the period of such information, and be assured that Dennis shall not be unprepared, to love and claim her in due time.

In

In our farewell interview he renewed his intreaties on this head, when suddenly tearing the babe from my arms, he departed, to hide his own emotions; a departure that, like an arrow through the air, leaves no trace behind it; for, O my children, Mrs. Lapelle lived but to hear of my daughter's birth; and that in return for her affectionate compliment to me, for it was by her earnest desire as well as her husband's secret wish, that their boy was called after me, we had bestowed upon this new bounty of Heaven, the name of Jeffy—the name of this our daughter's long engaged God-mother; and were resolved faithfully to fulfil every promise of amity respecting our children

dren subsisting between her husband and myself.

Poor Lapelle, inconsolable widower, as he was, for the purpose of changing the scene, and proving the efficacy of the assertion, by pouring his sorrows into the bosom of friendship, which says, grief, when divided, is hushed into peace; a few weeks after this melancholy event, embarked for England; his voyage, as a letter I received from him, written at the Maderias informed me, was not a prosperous one, previous to their touching at that island—but with the flattering hope, having repaired the injuries storms and tempests had done to their ship, they put a second time
to

to sea, impatient to reach the desired port; never more my Lydia, never more my Jeffy, sweet, sensible, sympathizing children, to be heard of, and left me to affirm, that the deep, never ingulfed a worthier man, or rent asunder a more heartfelt friendship.

The letter from Maderia, which gave me an account of his voyage, told me also, that his boy, his only treasure on earth, except me and mine, remained at Jamaica: the death of his wife having rendered his existence so precious to him that he trembled to think with what temerity he had brought him to that island, well knowing his affairs would require him to return once again; he

4 had

had determined he should continue, until increased strength and years, should enable him with as little hazard as possible, to sustain the fatigue of the passage.

By me, nevertheless, said Mr. Lawrence, though enquired after with unceasing perseverance, until hope was no more, was this so highly valued child, ever heard of—whether he died on the island, or how he was conveyed from thence—so extraordinary was his fate, and so severe my disappointment, remains still unascertained; and thus did my little girl lose in her very leading strings—her destined husband, and the son of my tenderest interest; yet weep not my darlings, the earthquake

quake and the hurricane will have their victims; and be assured for your comfort, that hard and difficult as the task has been; I am at length master of the science of resignation.

He now made each of them a present, to replenish their purse and restore the harmony of their spirits, and saying he was going to dress, they bid him good morning and withdrew.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

MRS. DICKSON'S VISIT TO THE DEBATING CLUB.

MRS. Dickson delighted with her commission, and in all the simplicity of well meaning ignorance—ignorance of the world, of manners, and of men, set forth the next morn—to execute it. She entered the great gates as usual, but could behold no human being; she ascended the stairs with

with the same ill success; but on gently pushing open the door of the chamber of polite and public resort, in order to take a peep, she perceived a young fellow, whose face she immediately fancied was not unknown to her, seated solus on one of the benches, apparently lost in thought and profound meditation.

Her heart bounded with joy at the sight of him; for even was she mistaken as to having seen him before; he must be one of the gentlemen debaters, from the wisdom of his countenance, and the situation in which she found him; she therefore let down her apron and gown which were, till that moment, most carefully pinned

up around her, and having shook out her other feathers in such a manner as to give her every possible advantage of appearance, approached him, but had made him three profound courtesies, and had thrice addressed him with, good sir, by your leave, before he was awakened from his reverie, and by starting, frightened her not a little. For me, madam, said he, his eye glancing timidly, hopelessly over the note held out to him—can it be to me.

Yes, sir, cried Mrs. Dickson, it is for no other earthly person than yourself, if you are one of the gentlemen debators, that has so frequently entertained a lady, I could, but must be excused naming. Mr. Jervais, for so
this

this young spark chose to be called, understood her in an instant, and affirming himself truly to be one of the happy men she was in quest of—opened the note with which she presented him—perused it with delight, and besought her to accept of a dish of chocolate, and to dry her feet which he perceived (so quick sighted was he) were very wet with her walk.

Dickson, who thought it her duty to madam St. John, to cultivate the good graces of a man, who had it so much in his power to serve and oblige her—consented to do as he desired; and whilst he withdrew, to provide an apartment, and procure her the

offered and accepted refreshment, lamented, as she viewed herself in the glass, she had made her cloaths in so terrible a pickle, by pacing rapidly through the dirty streets—to the disgrace, she feared, of her whose messenger she had the honor to be. A young woman now appeared, and told her she came from the gentleman to conduct her to a fire side, and a dish of chocolate, that was quite ready for her, where she found his conversation, she assured Mrs. St. John, so very agreeable, and the chocolate so excellent, that she did not remember to have spent a pleasanter morning in her whole life.

Mrs.

Mrs. St. John, exulting in her politics, repaired early to the club room, on the evening of debate; in order that they might be well feated, she said, and have a good view of the debators, as for her part she always loved to look at, as well as to hear, a fine orator.

The question being announced, a young fellow, not in the secret, thus addressed the audience; "At that period of human existence called the golden age, when the earth teemed with spontaneous plenty, and peace and concord were the summum bonum of human felicity; every aspiration of young or old after fortune, as a matrimonial requisite, would have

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been

been highly absurd, and highly ridiculous—a lovely person, a pleasing temper, were the attractions which wound themselves about the heart, and that determined the choice on all occasions. But in these, our days, when splendor is happiness, and amusement the business of life—this pastoral conduct must be reprobated, and under the Heavens, no two places can be more unlike each other, than Arcadia and Great Britain, she therefore who brings her thousands, and her tens of thousands, is the prize, ardently to be sought for, and rapturously obtained by every rational member of the British community. In what region the blind deity now holds dominion, is not therefore only unknown

known, but the knowledge is become wholly unnecessary—Plutus, my friends, Plutus alone is the modern divinity, and at his shrine each sex are forward to offer up infence; and what is it, let me ask you, that gold, omnipotent gold, cannot procure its happy possessor; should husband's home prove disagreeable to him, if his purse is but well filled, he can erect a temple for his household gods on whatever spot he pleases. Is his lady wife, capricious or petulant in her temper, provided she has but brought him wealth, it is of as little importance to his feelings as her form is to his eyes, for the world is his home; enjoyment his occupation, and an exemption from care, his unalienable privilege; cot-

tages and content he accordingly leaves to those soft natures that can delight therein; Lydia St. John sighed, and whilst they are languishing away their hours in pursuit of the shadow, he is enjoying the substance of felicity."

This speech was received with various opinions, according to the various tastes and tempers of the hearers. The gay and the dissipated extolled it to the skies; the unreflecting laughed, and the serious shook their heads: Olivia St. John found it in unison to her sentiments, but ventured not to bestow even a glance of approbation on it; the gentle Miss Jessy called it an inversion of all that was amiable
and

and desirable—Lydia stole a look at the youth of her affections, and had the pleasure to discover he was of his sister's mind—Redman Lawrence shrugged up his shoulders, as much as to say, smoke the cit, and Mrs. St. John called them all suddenly to order, perceiving the young man Dickson pointed out to her, for the person who had taken her brief, already in the rostrum, waiting for a silent interval; and who, on the buz subsiding, having gracefully waved his hand in token of commencement, and discovered he had riveted the eyes and ears of Mrs. St. John, thus began..

“It is a striking characteristic of a degenerate age, when that highest felicity

city of human existence, the union of two sensible and amiable hearts, is avowidly laughed at, or ridiculed—wherefore, Author of the universe, wherefore hast thou distinguished us from the rest of the animal creation, by such glorious endowments—the testimonies of our divine origin, the emanations of thy greatness; intellectual faculties, and intellectual graces; to prostitute our reason, and forfeit our sublime claims for the dross of the mine.

Can wealth give happiness, most emphatically exclaims Dr. Young; and as emphatically answering his own question, adds, look round and see what gay distress, what splendid misery; and who, let me ask you,
that

that has an atom of sensibility, taste, or refinement about them, can read Milton's Description of the first pair, without joining in the apostrophe such descriptions give rise to;

Hail wedded love !

The universally interesting subject, I will be bold enough to say, of our present evening's debate.

Now, gentlemen, whatever language the libertine or the stoic may chuse to adopt, I dare believe you will grant, can, in no degree alter the nature of things; men and women, may indeed obtain the sanction of the laws of their country, to reside under the same roof, to be called by the same name, and blend their unweildy fortunes; but is this the union,

delicacy and virtue understood by the word marriage, where tender sympathy, heartfelt esteem—all that the poet Thompson so beautifully paints, are the bands, but then, (here Mrs. St. John having a presentiment of the ground he was going to start upon, took out her pocket handkerchief to conceal her agitation) but then, cried the orator, the youth that generously wishes her who has merit sufficient to win his heart, should share his fortune likewise, however superior to her own, must use every precaution to defend himself from error; wealth evermore exposing its possessor to snares and deceptions. Very many young ladies, (the ladies must pardon me for saying so,) will, self-taught, try to engage his

his attachment; and parental lessons instruct others to dissemble an approbation, they cannot feel.

If such the danger—I perceive a hundred fine eyes demanding of me where they must look for the security; the predicament being the same to each sex; but as the ladies have able preceptors, and admirable counsellors in their maternal guardians, I beg leave, in my answer, to tell my young gentlemen auditors—the security consists alone in a knowledge of the natural disposition, and the mental cultivation of an amiable female—does she happily grow up from childhood, under our own eye, do we behold her mother, or other tender and judi-

ous superintending friend, forming her manners, her judgment and her sentiments to our wishes, let us not hesitate to give her, having obtained ourselves a due interest in her affections, a participation of our possessions, ample soever as they may be, for she will prove a brighter gem than the mines of Golconda or Peru can bestow, and a far more brilliant ornament to our lives. Men have many privileges from which the other sex are wholly excluded, for they can not only declare their passion to the beloved object, but lift her into equal consequence with themselves of whatever high degree, and when affection, is strengthened, is animated by gratitude; when the husband and the benefactor

nefactor are united in the same person, what but bliss can ensue; in proportion as he disclaims every sense of obligation, she feels her grateful sentiments augmented, and the only contention of their lives is, which shall love and which honor most.

This argument came so home to our FAMILY PARTY, that Lydia blushed, and Mr. Dennis Lawrence contrived to press her hand, whilst Olivia and Redman smiled at the beardless sage; nevertheless so well covered, were the secret opinions of the whole groupe, that Mrs. St. John fought in vain for the effect she had promised herself this debate would have had on each individual.

There

There are, resumed this inspired orator, as Mrs. St. John styled him in a whisper to Dickson, some women capable, from motives of friendship, of taking upon them the mother's character, Miss Jeffy was now touched, and kissed her aunt's hand, and surely continued he, if maternal care and kindness is meritorious, the cares and kindness resulting from friendship must have tenfold merit. A mother has her reward, when her offspring becomes what she wishes them to be, for all the accomplishments of her offspring reflect immediate honor on herself, and their happiness is her's; whereas, on the contrary, the friend has only the consciousness of having done a most generous and a most benevolent action,

action; to compensate her invaluable labors do her pupils prove; as Solomon phrases it, a crown to their husbands, all the celebrity rests in themselves; for though the maternal claims live for ever, in the eyes and in the hearts of the public, the hand of friendship that raised her pupils up to such meridian glory, is in a short time, remembered no more.

Mr. Jervais was well aware, from the agreeable changes in Mrs. St. John's countenance, that he had got at his desired clue to her favour; and stimulated by this secret encouragement, with equal eloquence, fire, and perspicuity, demonstrated her to be in consequence of her coming under
the

the descriptions he entered into, leaving every one's heart, nevertheless, to speak and judge for itself; one of the most liberal minded and worthy of women—nor could Machieval himself have thrown out a more masterly or resistless bait—every word he uttered went home to Mrs. St. John's heart, and animated her features with delight.

She was certain, she said, turning to Dickson, that he was an exemplary youth, for who besides himself at his early period of life, in this trifling age, thought it necessary to remember the obligations he so sweetly depicted, or when a woman happened to be barely passed her prime, conceived her fit for any other employment than settling
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the household bills of fare, copying receipts in cooking, and trying experiments for improving the science of good eating and drinking, for the gratification of those alone intitled to enjoy life, because some few years younger than their betters in every article of human excellence; nay, she knew some fops and flirts that carried their impertinence such lengths as to require a lady to give place to them as to a superior order of beings, intitled to look with contempt on those who happened, though ever so little, to precede them, on the parish register.

Mrs. St. John went home amidst the grateful praises of her niece and
nephews

nephews, exulting in what she deemed the luxury of well earned applause.

CHAP. VI.

NEW PROOFS OF MRS. ST. JOHN'S WISDOM AND SAGACITY.

ON her awaking the next morning from a dream, the most flattering of all others, to her self-consequence, Mrs. St. John's superabundant prudence suggested to her, the necessity there might be (young, handsome,

some, and accomplished as the orator was) who had found out his way to her heart—to guard her daughters from the danger of giving him an equal share in their approbation, and having commanded them for the purpose into her dressing room, and assumed a most unaccustomed sagacity of aspect, she thus addressed them—

“ My Olivia, and my Lydia, the eye of goodness, it is a moral adage, sees all things—and what eye is more quick in discerning than the maternal. The young gentleman, for such his abilities characterises him to be, I last night so abundantly, and I will acknowledge, deservedly commended, merits your applause, your admiration, your every

every species of approbance, but that which comes under the denomination of love—the prompt folly of young minds in this age, (for young minds in this age are unable to separate the agreeable orator from the man of their choice.) You know, continued she, my wishes in this important article of female conduct, and I trust your education and my example have been such, that I have alone to speak them, to constitute them your rule of action, you understand me, said the great and good lady, as perfectly from this short address, as if I was to write a volume on the subject—so leaving you to make your own reflections, through every combination and circumstance relative thereto.—I will only

only give you the consequence to tell you—you have nothing less than the honor and happiness of your mother in your keeping.

Lydia sighed on quitting the dressing room, and lifted up her eyes, despairingly to Heaven, whilst Olivia tossed up her head in a disdainful manner, saying to herself, the doctrine may be very good, but I shall make bold to follow my own inclinations. Having discharged this important duty to her satisfaction, Mrs. St. John began to turn it over in her mind, whether it was proper or not to give her niece a caution—but my niece, Dickson, said she, is such a little fool, I need not feel one apprehension

hension on her account; my daughters, indeed, added she, are a year or two older, and have a larger share of vivacity—however, this I can say for them, thanks to my discretion, novel reading has neither imposed upon their understandings, or warped their principles, and shew me such another mother if you can. I see, Dickson, you wonder at my making this observation, because you well know novel reading is the amusement of my leisure hours; but you should remember, I am at years to judge for myself—to separate the poison from the pleasure, and when they can do the same, let them read what authors they like, I shall never attempt to hinder them. It is, I am well aware, re-
joined

joined the lady, for in short, Dickson, what is there I am not well aware of, deemed inoculating young minds with wild fancies, to preach to them against their influence; but ignorance is so poor a defence, I shall not trust to it; for I would not have my children merely passive, or implicit in their choice in any instance; but by convincing their reason, secure their inclinations from error, besides my precepts are enforced, by being exemplified in my own conduct; for never, yet, no never, except in my marriage, was I caught tripping.

Mr. Lawrence having been informed of the merits of the preceding evening's debate, received her at

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breakfast,

breakfast, with compliments, or rather acknowledgments of the most grateful kind to her ear; and her heart and head became full therefrom of new plans to advance her long concealed wishes, and add fresh triumphs to her fame: on retiring for the evening she therefore thus addressed her humble friend. Well have you done, Dickson, (for Mrs. Dickson not only condescended to attend at her toilet, for the sake of her agreeable conversation, but participated her chamber also, where she slept on an elegant sofa,) well have you done this day—O, how I lament setting up as I have done, that irremovable bar to ever inviting strangers into my brother's house—my own celebration

of the advantages and the felicity of a FAMILY PARTY—a pretty party, truly, for a woman of my cultivated understanding, and social accomplishments to be confined to—a couple of boys, and three tall girls, that have every earthly thing yet to learn, to fit them for polite life and liberal converse.

The young gentleman debator, with whom you have formed a kind of acquaintance, in return for the exercise of his oratorical abilities in my service, was certainly intitled to be received by me with open arms, on the winding up of a debate that did me so much credit—nor shall it be denied by me, that it was my desire so to have done, but the chains of opinion,

and the fetters of custom, so grievously have I contrived to entangle myself thereby, that it is, for all the world, the same thing as being bound hand and foot from doing a right action. Dickson having acquiesced thus far—Mrs. St. John proceeded. But how to make an apology, cried she, I know not, the excellent dish of chocolate and pleasing attentions Mrs. Dickson had received on her first embassy, occurring on the moment to her mind, and looking forward, no doubt to a renewal of the same civilities, said, and what hinders you, madam, from acting, as your goodness of disposition suggests, by so uncommon a young gentleman?—I am ready to do your bidding whatsoever
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it may be, for you will never bid me do what is wrong, and so only speak the word.—

Hold, said Mrs. St. John, and tempt me not—Mrs. Dickson stared, nay, started, so theatrical and strong was Mrs. St. John's voice and manner as well as her expressions; I little thought, added she, smiling, and in a softened accent, even to the infantile, I should ever have found a tempter in my amiable Dickson, I protest, madam, replied Mrs. Dickson, I am for once in my life, wholly at a loss to comprehend your meaning. I believe you, my literary judging friend, * and

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thus

* The relator of this history begs it may be here observed that Mrs. St. John is accountable, not him, for whatever singularity of phrase this work contains, under her name.

thus I explain myself—I have acknowledged to you, that I not only think this debator worthy to be admitted, but would gladly, if in my power, admit him on my visiting list—would to Heaven such list existed at this period, for I would then soon prove, both to him and you, how frank and gracious my natural temper is; as matters however now stand, for you quite forget my brother's mental character—silent, yet observing, mild, yet penetrating; when you encourage me to do as I would in this instance—and thence it is, that I call it leading into temptation, for to encourage me to take a step, I fear, yet long to pursue, comes perfectly under the denomination.

Pope

Pope indeed tells us

“Kings can dispense with laws themselves have made,”

but was I, my dear good woman, to be guilty of violating the laws of this house, suggested by my own wisdom, and by my own authority established; take my word for it, it would prove an act of conduct that would infallibly sink me in Mr. Lawrence's confidence and estimation, for he would call it a glaring departure from character, so we will think no more of it. Here a silence ensued, during which Mrs. St. John sighed, and Mrs. Dickson wiped her face as if heated, by dissatisfaction.

But though we have done with the young gentleman, or rather with every

idea of forming an acquaintance with him—said Mrs. St. John, as a debator, who is kindly ready to serve us, we will always remember him—and so Dickson, I will confess to you, without further delay all my weakness. Masquerades are amusements, the well principled and the well judging profess to condemn, and could I refuse my assenting voice, but though my voice has condemned them I blush to feel, as well as to confess, my taste, my heart approves them. Years have nevertheless passed away since I have lived in the very neighbourhood, the sweet invitation of these assemblings, and never dared to breath a word in their favour, or permit my countenance to wear a single look, or betray the

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the sentiments I secretly entertained: need I say more, would then this able orator take the trouble to paint them in the harmless colourings, which I verily believe to be the fact respecting them—and throw all the danger on the true source, the chosen company with which people associate, when ill betides the frequenting them; I would make it my care to induce Mr. Lawrence to become one of the auditors, and in consequence of removed prejudices and clear conceptions, of all the why's and wherefore's respecting masquerades, which would naturally follow, bring him by insensible degrees, at some future day to propose our going there, and make it a compliment

to his and my children, that I consent to be of so gay a party.

Dickson jumped at the proposal; I will pledge myself for his doing his best, cried she, on the occasion, and can never doubt of his success.

Mrs. St. John having at length stated the question to her satisfaction, which ran thus, "Whether it was the place of resort, or the manners and principles of the company that constituted the danger of frequenting masquerades."—Dickson was dispatched to present the same, with proper items to Mr. Jervais, with an earnest request subjoined, that it might

might be brought forward as soon as possible.

Mr. Jervais, who flattered himself he should hear again from the lady, left orders with a porter, (put by him into waiting for the very purpose) that should Mrs. Dickson, describing her person, call and enquire for him, she should be desired to walk into a parlour, presented with a dish of chocolate, and prevailed upon to stay until he could be fetched to attend her; the whole of which was duly performed, and he flew on the wings of ardent expectation to enquire the lady's commands; Dickson gave him Mrs. St. John's letter.

My eloquence, cried he, does this lady so kindly condescend to solicit the exercise of my eloquence, as a favor, when she confers an unspeakable one upon me, by deigning to accept of it.

Mrs. Dickson bid her memory set down this, and not only the words but the air, the accent with which they were uttered for she knew the account thereof would be highly pleasing to Mrs. St. John, and Mr. Jervais having established an amicable league between them, and engaged Mrs. Dickson's promise that whenever she should happen to pass that way, she would drop in and take her dish of chocolate at his expence; which he assured her

her she could not do him a greater pleasure; they parted with the most cordial good will on each side—Mrs. Dickson thinking him the finest gentleman imaginable, and he being convinced that she was a truly worthy, however silly, woman.

Mr. Jervais conceiving on the instant, that this debate must be intended to produce an early permission for the FAMILY PARTY to participate the amusement he was to disculpate with all his powers from every shadow of danger, or dangerous tendency—and on the instant resolving to join them, at least in the rooms under the sanction of a masquerade dress—he joyfully advertised the question fabricated

cated by Mrs. St. John—and Mrs. St. John evaded, by a morning's airing to the villa, having the papers read to her brother, for when she was absent it was no object with him, to enable herself at her return, as a sudden thought, to ask him, well apprised as she was of the advertisement, if he was disposed to hear a debate that evening, as she and all his family would be proud of his company—Mr. Lawrence consented immediately, and seemed even pleased it was proposed, and accordingly, that very evening, for the first time in his whole life, made his appearance at the DEBATING CLUB.

CHAP.

C H A P. VII.

MR. LAWRENCE'S VISIT TO
THE DEBATING CLUB,
AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

OUR readers must not, however, be uninformed, that Mrs. St. John, (who was too good a general to leave one avenue unguarded) had bid Mrs. Dickson recommend it to Mr. Jervais, whenever he spoke on the masquerade question, to wear a disguise, for reasons, it was not improbable, she might some time or other personally

personally assign to him; a bushy bag wig was therefore provided by him—and with such good effect, that even Mrs. St. John's penetrating eye was deceived on the fine *coup d'æl* of his figure, but if Mrs. St. John applauded herself for her caution, when her only view and idea was to prevent her brother's seeing how young the orator was that defended the cause of visiting masquerades—how did she congratulate herself thereupon, when Dickson had made her report of the joy, the transport with which Mr. Jervais received her commands.

The poor youth, I fear, cried the lady, loves me, for I now recollect numberless articles that bespeak much

more than common, than accidental kindness—I am very sorry, for such is the predicament I am under, that it will not be in my power to sooth his anguish, by convincing him of my esteem, or reconciling him to the propriety of my denial, from the disparity of our age, because you know, Dickson, I have put it out of my power to converse with him.

Mrs. Dickson, who immediately imbibed, and adopted Mrs. St. John's opinion, felt her good nature much wounded, that so brave, and so bright, and so clever a youth, should be born to the hard destiny of loving the only lady, she could persuade herself, would heave the heart to refuse him.

When

When arrived and seated in the club room, a young fellow presently arose, and having dealt out a short but bitter sarcasm on the folly, the dissipation, the madness of the times, gave place to the great black wighed gentleman, who really made a very sage and learned figure, and who delivered the following harangue :

“Of all the errors to which mankind are subject, none is greater, or more unaccountable than the effect of certain sounds on the ear, and on the heart, whence thus it is that the name of a church excites an idea of security, and the mention of that amusement, called a masquerade, a sensation of fear—nevertheless the spots of earth
are

are equally innocent and equally safe to be resorted to; for who need be told, that a church (if the heart is corrupted) may be prostituted to the vilest purposes, purposes of intrigue and assignation, and a masquerade, when the party is worthy and amiable, rendered a scene of no less harmless than pleasing relaxation; it is, indeed, urged that the genius of folly and of amour presides at the latter; but can it not also be proved that piety and peace often dwell not in temples inscribed to their names. Let us not, therefore, deceive ourselves with either fabulous, or fictitious notions, but look at things so clearly and discriminately as to comprehend them at all points, for the sons and daughters of levity, will
be

be true to their characters, however sacred the dome; and virtue, remain all lovely virtue, however gilded the canopy over its head."

"That domestic misfortunes have originated from visiting masquerades we do not mean to deny, but have they not likewise awaited those whose feet never trod, that imagined unhallowed ground; for who, or what can prevent the very mansion of the Deity from being prophaned, but the uprightness of the heart, and where is the power, less than omnipotent that can render the upright heart, other than upright, let the situation be what it may; and the Omnipotent, we well know, cannot be the Author
of

of evil; from these premises I will, without hesitation, affirm, that all the danger or safety in visiting a masquerade, solely depends upon the propriety or impropriety of conduct in those, that form our company; for with the pure we shall ever be pure, and with the amiable we shall evermore be amiable. Let no one then, henceforth venture to disclaim against a consequence without an accurate, previous disquisition of the cause; for as the licentious remain unchanged, however sanctified the place they frequent; so will the innocent remain innocent, even in the act of participating a masquerade, if their companions are not such as insensibly and imperceptibly to contaminate

contaminate their morals from having joined hands with them."

The orator paused—and Mrs. St. John took the opportunity of his breathing to profess her surprise and conviction; I always hitherto thought masquerades places of too high ton for OUR FAMILY PARTY to appear at, but brother, I begin now to believe I shall change my opinion—prejudice of education ought to be renounced, and ungratified curiosity we all know, has been the source of much youthful indiscretion; if, therefore, having duly canvassed, according to our custom, the several powers and contres, perhaps we may both judge it best for me to take the children there, than
that

that they should find the way themselves at some future ineligible period. Take them wherever you please, cried Mr. Lawrence, for such is my confidence in the goodness of your understanding, and the goodness of your heart, that I shall never doubt their safety when under your wing.—However, resumed the orator, “That idle objections may no longer influence our conduct, but that our British ladies may find themselves as safe at a masquerade from every manœuvre, or act of chivalry, as they are in reality; be it remembered by them, for the honor of our common sense and rational principles, that the days of knight errantry are now no more—that the improvements in our roads has opened so useful and so happy an
intercourse

intercourse with the metropolis—that no female above the rank and inclination of a dairy maid can apprehend being carried off, either violently or skilfully without the fair lady's having a presentiment of the intended outrage, and the means within her reach, by dint of judicious conduct, to be self-delivered from the hands of her ravisher. Enchanted castles and giant caves exist not at this polished and enlightened period in Britain; for which avenue to the great city, I beseech you, is an unfrequented one; of course what distressed and unconsenting damsel can be bore away, either in the face of the noon day sun, or of those brilliant substitutes for his will drawn beams—the torches, and lamps which illuminate

illuminate our festive evenings; accidents may sometimes happen, but do they not often happen in domestic circles—the accidents that arise from disputes—wherefore then shall we require it, for the reputation of masquerades, that jarrings or disorders shall never incommode the company; I will therefore, in support of the safety of visiting them conclude with this short rule of conduct for those young persons permitted so to do, namely, that in case of separation (on whatever cause, from their friends and party) or mistake thereof, never to go a footstep with any one that refuses to shew their face, or that is found to be unable to tell them their name and family on a discovery of their own.

This was a decisive, and fortunately for the orator, an unsuggested argument—Mrs. St. John declared it was as plain a path as any through life, with common sense for our guide, and that she would never more pay regard to the fears of ignorance, or the tales of the artful against masquerades to the end of her days. Nothing was now talked of at Mr. Lawrence's but masquerades—nor was any thing more eagerly wished for, particularly by Mrs. St. John, than an opportunity of enjoying one——she waited, therefore, with unspeakable anxiety, each succeeding morn for the arrival of the news papers—not as usual to look after commercial concerns, or common occurrences, but

but for the announcement of a masquerade. Hope, deferred, Solomon, the wife, asserts, makes the heart sick—and his assertions were verified to its utmost in the person of Mrs. St. John. Do but remark, Dickson, she would say, how my evil genius is at work, no week, I am positive, for this three months, has passed without advertisements respecting the masquerade in the Haymarket, until I obtained my brother's unexpected approbation to go, and now my eyes ache with searching for such advertisements in vain.—Is the gay world fallen into a lethargy—is the taste for joys, nothing but a masked ball can bestow, extinguished in the land—and must I, Tantalus like, remain thus with the cup at my very

lips, yet prohibited to quaff its delicious contents—and thus figuratively would Mrs. St. John, on occasions of disappointment, when *tête à tête* with Dickson, always express herself, in so much that she might be truly said to address her in heroics—and Mrs. Dickson failed not on her part always to answer in the elegiac style—for lamentation began and ended every sentence that fell from her lips—lamentation that so good a lady should ever feel pain—lamentation that it was not in her poor power to relieve her—lamentation that the world could not be new modelled to do her pleasure—and lamentation that every one did not revere her as she did; but at length the glad time did arrive—a masquerade in the

the

the Haymarket was advertised, and Mrs. St. John's head was almost turned inside out with delight, by her brother's bidding her let the children, for once, see the foolish raree show. Be it sufficient, however, to say the whole powers of her mind and body were brought into action in consequence of this enchanting commission—but first, as was most due, the matter of self debate with her became, in what striking or interesting dress she should break forth upon the eyes of the company—a languishing or a commanding figure—a mental, or a fanciful object of attraction; she studied attitudes before her looking-glass—examined the closet of beauties at Hampton Court—read over every newspaper

file she could procure, that contained accounts of the bon mots let off—and the characters most celebrated at former periods—in order to whet her wit and assist her choice on the present occasion, four days and four successive nights were her thoughts and her hours thus warmly occupied, when lo! the day approached so near, that she was at last compelled to make a hasty determination, on the important point; there was nevertheless to the latest moment one article of essential gratification, she dared not venture to explore; and that was, whether the dear youth, the all eloquent, the resistless gentleman debator, would, or would not have the courage to meet her there.

Dickson,

Dickson, in the plain simplicity of her heart, and unformed manners, was for putting the point blank question to him, but Mrs. St. John protested she should not survive the disgrace it would bring upon her—could he indeed have been obliquely, and delicately wire-drawn at a distance, she should have had no objection—a task far too high for Mrs. Dickson's abilities; she must, therefore, leave it to its own operations, and not countenance, by her actions, the discoveries she had every reason to fear her tell-tale features would make to him—how abundantly she approved him.

Mrs. St. John, as it happened, knew little of the man she had to deal

with, when she could make a doubt of his availing himself of so glorious an opportunity, as will be seen in the next chapter.

CHAP. VIII.

A MASQUERADE.

MRS. Dickson, modestly doubting her own abilities to support a character, begged permission of Mrs. St. John to wear a domino—why you foolish woman, cried the lady, are not dominos, when they do speak,

Speak, expected to speak as much to the purpose as any character in the whole assembly; but Dickson, it seems, had informed herself, that dominos, without having the badge of folly fixed on their shoulders, might pass the evening silent observers of the rest of the company; and, therefore, stuck to her request, and obtained it. Mr. Dennis Lawrence wore a domino also, because of the privileges it conferred — Lydia was a shepherdess — Olivia a sultana — Mrs. St. John a quaker — Miss Jeffy had an elegant domino, for she protested against every attempt above her abilities to accomplish, and Redman was a grand vizier. But never was there so talkative a creature as the fair disciple of neatness and

FAMILY PARTY.

silence, Mrs. St. John, would represent. The whole seven heterogenous figures were stuffed, by way of privacy, into the family coach, (Mrs. St. John assuring her brother she would not trust one of the children out of her sight) which created so much mirth amongst the spectators, that the lady, whose dress was all gentleness and peace, was for having every creature taken into custody for impertinence, that presumed to laugh at her expence.

Mr. Jervais, who had taken good care to be there before them, discovered Mrs. Dickson as soon as she entered the great room; and, indeed, her air and manner were not a little remarkable,

remarkable, and plainly denoted what she had told Mr. Jervais was the case, that it would be the first time she had seen so gallant a sight, and having obtained this key, he was not long at a loss to discriminate Miss Lawrence from her relations, for she was not so tall as either of her cousins—had not the bold mein of Olivia, or the pastoral one of Lydia—but looked—her sweet unaffected self, in spite of her mask—and though he spoke not to her, contrived to attend her like her shadow, or more properly her guardian angel, wherever she went. For be it here acknowledged, that though a lively fancy, and a vacant heart (for Mr. Jervais had never yet met with a magnetic object) had induced him to

become a volunteer debator—Mrs. Dickson would not have found him so propitious to her wishes, or prompt to advance Mrs. St. John's wishes—but that Miss Lawrence's lovely figure and winning deportment had repeatedly drawn him to take an humble seat behind her, to hear the music of her voice, and learn as much as possible, from the conversation of her party whose daughter and treasure she was; and in one of these withdrawing, and withdrawn situations, Mrs. Dickson was observed by him also—observed in the very light she truly stood; an humble friend of the family, nor did either the simplicity or the goodness of her mental character escape his notice (the unsuspecting and the unassuming

suming individual) in so much that he was in the very act of meditating how best to introduce himself to her knowledge, when fate or fortune brought her so opportunely and so accidentally to the club room—no wonder, therefore, that to approach Miss Lawrence without startling her innocent mind—alarming her aunt's prudence, her brother's pride, or awakening a single spark of jealousy (the jealousy, a preference, however justifiable, always gives birth to in uncultivated minds and such he was wicked enough to conceive the hearts of the Miss St. Johns to be, unknowing as he was of their mother's abilities as well as her exertions to cultivate them) should be an object with him, or that he constituted

tuted approaching and following her, the joy of this masquerade evening.

Mrs. St. John's vanity—from the enchantment of the music, the animation of the lamps—the wit of the company, or whatever other cause became unbounded, it overflowed at her lips—it gave her feet the agility of a wood-nymph, and her brother, her niece, her daughters, her nephews—every body but her dear self was forgotten by her, and at liberty to pursue their own inclinations. Mr. Dennis Lawrence seized his Lydia's hand, and leading her to a sofa, though unretired from the ball room, said some things to her that made her full amends for having been a mortified spectator

spectator of her mother's vanity—for he said he would die, as he had long lived, her constant and faithful admirer.

The sultana and grand vizier, Olivia and Redman, mixed in a cotillion with the dancers, and poor Jessy kept close to good Mrs. Dickson, whilst her aunt flew here and there and every where to display her talents. She gained, indeed, many, but was unable to fix one lover—until at length, to the unspeakable astonishment of Miss Lawrence and Mrs. Dickson, she suffered herself to be taken out by a gay lucifer, to dance a minuet.

The

The contrast was so striking as to draw a croud around them—Olivia and Redman broke up their cotillion party to view it, and laughed a loud—Lydia and Mr. Dennis Lawrence having blushed for Mrs. St. John, went for some refreshment to the side board—and Miss Jeffy was so disconcerted by the circumstance; heated and incommoded by the croud, that she was separated from Mrs. Dickson, her only companion, and beginning to be greatly alarmed, when a domino, which she took for her eldest brother, came up to her, she therefore hastily caught hold of his arm and besought him to lead her into the air.

Her

Her voice, her form, could not be disregarded by other than the ear and eye of insensibility—and insensibility not happening to be the characteristic of the gentleman she addressed, he instantly resolved to take advantage of her mistake; so putting her arm, with a brotherly freedom, within his, he led the way—not indeed to another apartment—but to the outward lobby, ordering a coach to be called, what can you mean brother, cried Miss Lawrence; I wish, it is true, to quit the heat and nonsense of this place, but my aunt delights in what fatigues me, and I would not for the world disoblige her; the domino returned no answer, but being informed the coach was come, pushed forward for the outward

outward door, and drew her with him. Terrified and shocked—she recollected the words of the gentleman debator—“or should a doubt arise on being separated from your company, respecting him who joins you, either compel the mask to shew his face, or shew your own, nor advance a single step with him until he has told you your name and family.”

Mr. Jervais, who, amongst the rest, in consequence of the croud, had been jostled from his station at Miss Lawrence's side, and had sought her from room to room with trembling anxiety, and condemning himself for closing with Mrs. St. John's views, for the gratification of her extravagant

gant vanity, arrived at this moment so fraught with danger, to the object of his tenderest concern, and heard Miss Lawrence say, (pulling off her mask) now sir, tell me who I am, since you will not give me the satisfaction of knowing you—when Jervais springing forward, exclaimed Miss Lawrence, wherefore do I behold you separated from your aunt, your brothers, your cousins, and in the hands of a stranger; of a stranger! cried she, and swooned. The domino folded his arms about her, and swore no power on earth should rob him of his prize — knock him down, said the spectators — O touch him not, said Jervais, until the lady is rescued from his hold—Let me pass on for the lady's
fake,

fake, cried the domino, she will expire unless she is conveyed into the air—Stop the way, said Jervais, I dare not strike him for fear of hurting the lady, and since need calls—the cry of stop up the way was echoed by a multitude of voices—for lo! Mrs. St. John having missed her niece, was so thoroughly cured of her fit of vanity, that with her mask off, and distraction in her air, followed by Dickson, her daughters, and nephews (having learned a young lady was in distress) flew to the spot, and joined the cry of stop up the way, with the loudest vociferation.

The domino hearing her addressed by the name of St. John, a name of consequence

consequence in the world—and finding it impossible to make way through the croud, had the dexterity to slide Miss Lawrence into Mr. Jervais's arms, and to decamp with the utmost precipitation. "Heavens, exclaimed Mrs. St. John, (revived by seeing her niece open her eyes) what miracle has saved you from destruction!" Jervais bowed in token of his happy share in the action, when knowing him for the gentleman debator.—O, dear sir, cried the lady, convey me from the gaze of the multitude—enable me to collect my scattered spirits, and if possible reconcile me to myself, or I will never see my brother more.

This speech broke like a clap of thunder on the ears of the FAMILY

PARTY, and Mr. Jervais humbly proposed their all going over to the Orange coffee-house, where, in a private room, they might acquire composure; any where, any where, good fir, you approve, replied Mrs. St. John, for you are the preserving angel to us on this frightful occasion, and to the Orange coffee-house he had the felicity of helping to support Miss Jessy, though now tolerably well recovered; down on your knees, niece, said Mrs. St. John, on their entering the apartment to which they were conducted, and thank that gentleman—for more than life—your honor, niece—the loss of which I could never have survived.

Mr.

Mr. Jervais intreated the young lady would not think herself under the smallest obligation to him; he owned, indeed, it was providential chance had brought him to the spot, so seasonably, for a more determined villain he had never before beheld, but that what he had done was the simplest and the commonest of all good natured actions. Mrs. St. John, now, for the first time, recollecting the situation she was in, furrounded by her children, and the children of her brother, from whom, of all persons living, she was most desirous to conceal her little manœuverings, turned pale and red, and red and pale, alternately, until her alarmed friends expected her to fall into a swoon, and were for calling in
some

some gentlemen of the faculty to break a vein. No, no, cried she, clapping her hand, like a tragedy queen, upon her heart—it is not in the power of medical assistance to relieve me. It is here I am wounded, then covering her face, she begged to be spared all conversation for a few moments. How unfortunate are those, said she to herself, must I ever repeat, who carry, their zeal in any cause so far as to set up a bar against their own future wishes—why did I expatiate so continually, and so strongly upon the merits and the happiness of a FAMILY PARTY?—why, but at the instigation of my evil genius—that even at the most distant period of my folly and assiduity, foresaw my
present

present cutting repentance—how delightfully would this young gentleman's conversation and company have enlivened the dull hours we now pass, and made our fire side smile—what a task am I involved in, and how can I hope to extricate myself—the coward's courage, however, must be mine—desperate diseases must have desperate remedies, and let it be remembered also, by me, that those who have not the fortitude to make head against misfortune, do not deserve to rise superior to it—catch me, nevertheless, running myself into these kind of defiles again, and I will absolve my fate, though destruction should ensue.

Dickson, who had never seen Mrs. St. John in a fit of the penitentials before, and concluding, therefore, that she was really in a very bad way, had the address to intimate as much to her nephews, without, being perceived by her, and advised them, by all means, to send for a physician. Distressed beyond measure they both left the room, and Miss Lawrence complaining she was very faint, Mrs. Dickson conveyed her to a bed, in an adjoining chamber, that she might repose herself a little before they went home; (Olivia and Lydia seating themselves by her,) and returning to Mr. Jervais, asked him his opinion of the scene.

Mrs.

Mrs. St. John opened her eyes, and discovering every obstacle so unexpectedly, and so agreeably removed, immediately conjured the young gentleman never to let it escape him he had seen Mrs. Dickson any where except at the DEBATING CLUB, as one of the auditors, and at the masked ball. Jervais delighted with the power of obliging a lady so nearly allied to the lady of his heart, fell on his knees, and kissing her hand with profound devotion, promised religiously to observe her request in its utmost possible latitude.

Mrs. St. John affected to blush, and looking at Mrs. Dickson, gave a sigh to the gentle youth whose passion she

H 2 feared,

feared, as she afterwards told her, would prove the bane of his existence, footsteps on the stair case now alarmed her ear, nor was her mind at ease when she beheld her nephews, accompanied by a gentleman of the faculty, enter. You will have the goodness to forgive us, said Dennis, in answer to the air of countenance she wore, if we have done too much—but we could never have forgiven ourselves if we had left any thing undone, that might eventually be of service to you. The physician, laying down his muff and gloves, proceeded without further delay to feel her pulse, declaring her case spasmodic, called for pen, ink and paper, in order to write a prescription. It is unnecessary, cried Mrs. St. John, putting

putting a handsome fee into his hand
—I have met with a fright, sir—the
effects of which alone produce the
spasms you mention—and when I can
recover the cause, I doubt not but the
consequence will exist no longer.

The physician, who had a very
agreeable person, finding himself so
well paid for his visit, would gladly
have obtained leave to visit her again,
but she persisted in begging to be ex-
cused, for reasons she must also be ex-
cused assigning, though her vanity
was wounded unspeakably all the time
she was passing this cruel sentence
upon so pleasing a gentleman—when
she was certain, from the tender atten-
tions he shewed towards her and her's,

would have rejoiced to lay his heart at her feet; politeness at length not permitting him to stay longer he bowed twice, thrice, and with apparent emotion, as Mrs. St. John observed to Mrs. Dickson, withdrew. And what compensation, cried Mrs. St. John, turning abruptly to Mr. Jervais, can we offer you, for your services, having first learned to know how high to rate them. In short, sir, with respect to female honor, my sentiments are similar to that celebrated Roman General, Virginius, who slew his beloved daughter with his own hand to preserve her person from violation; think then, O think, the gratitude I bear you. If I am not too presumptuous, having, by your commands, formed a secret wish,

with, — speak it, cried she, and if in our power it shall be accomplished; previously, however, said Mr. Jervais, I must mention, that my fortune is not despicable, of my education and appearance you will judge for yourself, to be on your acquaintance list. I feared as much, exclaimed Mrs. St. John, it is the very request of all others out of my power to grant, but you must know our absurdities that you may not dispise our conduct, for whether from pride or from prudence, it is the etiquette at my brother's, both at home and abroad, for to be wholly and solely a FAMILY PARTY. In public we will evermore be happy to join you, though even then it must be done with due caution; for as I would

not for the world have my brother know the circumstance of this night's unfortunate adventure, I must be guarded at all points in my notice of you. Mr. Jervais was much mortified by this reply—for if the service he had rendered Miss Lawrence, would not open her father's doors to him, he despaired of ever obtaining admission—and now his fears for her health pressing forcibly upon his mind—he looked towards the apartment to which she was retired, as a hint to her aunt, that it might be proper to ask how she did. My niece, cried Mrs. St. John, is it possible that we have all of us forgot my niece, and let the physician go away without taking his opinion of her. Mrs. Dickson hastened
to

to repair her fault, and found all the young ladies charmingly, she said, and ready to go home whenever Mrs. St. John pleased. A hackney coach was accordingly sent for, Mrs. St. John recollecting, with much satisfaction, that she had settled with her brother not to use their own carriage back, and the ladies being called for, joined the company. Mr. Jervais laid infinite constraint on himself, in his general address, and congratulatory compliments to the lovely trio, (as Mrs. St. John, whispering Dickson, styled her daughters and niece) and as seven was all the coach could hold—having assisted them into it, not being able otherwise to follow it, Mr. Jervais threw off his domino, mounted up

H 5

behind,

behind, for the pleasure of seeing them safe to their own house—in other words how Miss Jessy supported the fatigue of being conveyed there—and descending unobserved, he beheld her walk into her father's house, and went to his lodgings with much satisfaction.

CHAP. IX.

A STROKE OF FINESSE.

MR. Lawrence, secure as he persuaded himself he was in his sister's prudence and discretion, went to bed before ten o'clock, and no vision

sion of his pillow giving him the slightest intimation of what had happened; he only asked on rising, at his usual hour in the morning, if they were all returned safe—and being answered in the affirmative, went out quite happy; at breakfast, however, for he waited for them till twelve, he was somewhat disappointed; for, instead of the high glee with which he had expected them to give him the particulars of their evening's entertainment, he found every individual of them disinclined to touch upon it, having pondered this extraordinary circumstance in his mind, it occurred to him, and he was unable to suppress his risibility, that his sister must have discovered, as he had had a kind

of presentiment she would, that however well qualified she might be to figure away in the city—she had mistaken both her ground and her abilities when seeking to enjoy a masked ball, for as mixing with people of fashion, had never been a necessary ingredient in his happiness, he thought it very probable a woman born and bred on the other side of temple bar, might feel an awkwardness when blended with those of high rank and polished manners—in so much that though one of the best natured men in the world, so whimsically and pleasantly did his imagination paint the groupe of cits to his eyes, that at length he laughed out-right to the amazement of all present.

Mrs.

Mrs. St. John, who was nevertheless glad to see him so much at his ease could not suppress her curiosity as to the cause of his mirth, saying nay, brother, can it be fair to keep a good joke thus to yourself—for a good joke it must certainly be, that can divert so highly; may be so sister replied the merchant still laughing on, and may be not—but you shall find I can for once keep my own counsel—you have told me none of your gay frolics—and so to be even with you, I will not communicate mine, and what have you to say to that—is not tit for tat fair play on all occasions; worse and worse, cried Mrs. St. John, but I own, brother, you have spoiled me hitherto by indulgence; will you compromise the
matter

matter with us, and let us compare notes. No, no, said the merchant, none of your after thoughts for me; if I was not worthy to hear what you could relate, unbribed and unimpulsed by a desire to dive into my private concerns, we will have nothing more to say to each other on the subject, but am I not to see our Lydia and Jessy this morning.

Mrs. St. John, as Miss Lawrence could not recover her spirits, artfully contrived that her cousin Lydia should also absent herself from the breakfast table, she therefore, on enquiry, answered they were both such poor rakes as to be a little indisposed, and would, by her advice, keep their chamber

for

for that day, and was so taken up with her apprehensions and her precautions, that Dennis Lawrence's change of countenance at this piece of news, wholly escaped her observation; not so his father, he had been a lover himself, and could therefore detect others, and being much delighted with the first symptoms of the kind he had ever perceived, for it was his secret desire Dennis and Lydia should make choice of each other, he clapped him upon the shoulder, and told him he was rejoiced to find one of his family had eyes to see, and sensibility to feel the merits of Lydia St. John. Mrs. St. John coloured at these words, and the breakfast being over noded to the young people to retire, and thus bespoke

spoke her brother. It would be well, said she, for parents in general, if they could guard their children from mixing with the opposite sex, both males and females, for the hearts of young people are strangely susceptible, and the consequence such as lead down to regrets and disappointment; but from our near relationship and the generosity of my brothers temper I can not suppose so melancholy a fate awaits me or mine, as to endanger, much less wound his repose, what you behold us, you have made us—drawn from solitude, and advanced to prosperity; was it not the work of my brother's hands, educated, grown up under his roof; should my daughters become his, shall I have aught to ask
of

of Heaven but that they may be always found worthy the blessings your countenance and bounty has bestowed upon them.

Mr. Lawrence was so touched (as the lady intended he should) by this fine speech, that for some moments he had not the power to reply, but recovering himself, and taking her by the hand, be our children united, said he, I ask no greater felicity, be their choice our approbation, and my fortune shall be rendered a common blessing to them all. Having poured forth her most grateful acknowledgements; leave these matters then, most liberal minded of men, said she to me, I am no stranger to the state of our children's

children's heart, and will, with a truly maternal regard promote their happiness, having so unexpectedly obtained your sanction for so doing, and what impediment could you, even in the fullness of your wisdom, foresee in this respect, replied the merchant, is not their birth equal to my sons, and my superiority of cash to yours, a chance of the die—gold cannot buy virtue, for virtue is above all price—and a union with your lovely girls will therefore, however deficient in the article of fortune, enoble my offspring.

But sister, highly soever as I do think of your discernment and penetration, I must be allowed to repeat it, that if I have any skill in physiognomy,

mony, Dennis's heart is in Lydia's keeping—not that I will pretend to say friendship is not affection or affection friendship, in a worthy and a kind relative, yet the evident shock you mention of Lydia's indisposition had upon his feelings seems to tell me a tale of strange attachment.

Mrs. St. John again conjuring him (for it was, she said, the proper province of a female) to leave the management to her, under pretence of retiring to dress, marched off to talk the affair over with her beloved Dickson. Mrs. Dickson marvelled, in unison with Mrs. St. John's marvelings, at the blindness and folly Mr. Lawrence was guilty of in conceiving Lydia, not Miss Olivia was Dennis's choice

choice—but he was always partial, said Dickson, to that young lady, and therefore, she supposed, wished to see her a lady mayorefs before her elder sister. But that is an event cried Mrs. St. John (her face all in a flame) that shall never happen whilst I am alive, for I think no city plot will be found an over-match for my skill and politics; Dennis is a kind hearted youth, and therefore say nothing of the near relationship being brought up from infancy with the girl, has taught himself an interest in her health and welfare; and nothing more take my word for it. Mrs. Dickson was now called upon to receive a note, brought her by a chairman, it proved from Mr. Jervais to enquire after the ladies healths,

healths, professing himself miserable upon their account. Now this is another youth, cried Mrs. St. John, that my brother, if he was to see him in company with his niece Lydia, would be mistaking for one of her lovers also, though I think, Dickson, both you and I can tell on what hinge his affections turn, however, let me not prolong his suspense, we can take up the subject where we set it down, after his answer is dispatched. On my word, Dickson, he writes a sweet hand, and his language breathes the tender passion, he is miserable on our account, miserable to know how we do after the alarms and fatigues of the evening, and the poor fellow you see has the prudence to couch his enquiries in
such

such general terms, that all may conceive themselves an object of interest with him, whilst only you and I know how to trace that interest to its literal magnet.

The chairman was sent back with thanks, and the agreeable information, that they were all quite different creatures, to those he had parted with the preceding evening in the Hay-market—in dress, in health and in spirits. You see, Dickson, how much of the merchant has entered into my brother's composition, that though his own heart is replete with compassion and generosity, sufficient to incite him to perform every kind and benevolent action, he cannot forbear confounding those

those sentiments in the breast of another with a sinister motive—he himself would lament, even to tears, if Lydia was dangerously ill, yet cannot see his son a little startled on her account, without concluding him to be her lover as well as her friend; yet if the secrets of all hearts could be explored, it was the general concern that alarmed him, not merely the indisposition of the single individual—but least that indisposition should cause circumstances to transpire to give me pain. But apropos, of secrets my brother has given my curiosity warm exercise this morning in so much, Dickson, that I wish you would make it your business to pick out of the servants, if you can, what passed in the family

family before we arose—he laughed, Dickson, in the first instance I was aware, from some whimsical idea, but when the fit was once on him, laughed on, at the idea of having laughed me into an inquisitive mood, and given himself an opportunity of retorting upon us for omitting to entertain him with the particulars of the masked ball, and indeed I confess it must seem odd, and therefore wonder I failed to guard against it, that such a set of gossips as he was accustomed to find us on our return from any public place, should fold ourselves up in silence and reserves, upon so new and grand a subject as the masquerade—I will, however, have another trial of skill with him before I sleep, to draw him

him before I sleep, to draw him in to confess what it was that so singularly diverted him. But what is to be done, demanded she, with this poor Jervais, for we ought not to forget his claims upon us, though he is too modest to remind us of them—He remind you! cried Dickson, he scorns it—and therefore, replied Mrs. St. John, renders it our more immediate duty to do him justice—he says he is a young fellow of fortune, and I believe him to be such, for his exterior is elegant, and his education must have been liberal. But, Dickson, did you observe the physician; on my word I fancy he would gladly have presented me with a fee, to have had the honor of my acquaintance. He was very fit, in appearance as well as behaviour,

for his profession, for his manners were soft, his expressions insinuating, and his eyes—did you observe his eyes, Dickson? O yes, madam, cried Dickson, and what was the attractive object of his eyes into the bargain. I protest, Dickson, said the lady, if I have the sin of vanity to answer for, you are more than half as culpable as myself, for whether it is from your good natured temper, your partial view of all I say and do, or from the reality of my deservings, you are always ready, by your concurring voice, with the voice of the multitude—to fan the spark into a flame. I will, however, acknowledge to you, which is a part of the business, (from the nature of things you must be totally unacquainted

acquainted with)—that the instant he felt my pulse I was convinced of the power my few charms had on his heart—but what does it avail me, situated as I am, if I was to make as many conquests as the great Alexander of old—I must not be accessible——the FAMILY PARTY must bond my sphere of connections; and who have I to thank for that but my own too abundant anxiety to please Mr. Lawrence, and set his heart at rest with respect to the safety of his children; and so far we ought to remember I have been successful, that I have brought my brother, with tears in his eyes, to beseech me to let my portionless daughters marry his affluent sons; there you will say, there is my reward

—why I grant you as much, if I was ninety, and that is at an age when all self cases ought to expire, and that it is an honor to our nature to live for others; but, Dickson, ha! ha! ask the physician his opinion, and be assured he will tell you without a fee, that I am somewhat distant from the period that would justify me to my own heart, if I was to forget my still subsisting claims; or suppose we refer ourselves to poor Jervais—do you think we should receive a verdict in our favour or not; ha! Dickson, but answer me not, for where things speak themselves—if humility asks a silly question, she is not intitled to receive an answer, yet, madam, said Dickson, I much wish to hear you resolve
your

your own question — “What do you mean to do with poor Mr. Jervais? — will you not strain a point in return for all he has done for you, no less in your own person than in the person of your niece—will you for ever deny him the satisfaction of conversing with you at your own house, for is not your brother’s house to all intents and purposes yours, or what, let me ask you, can he think of Mr. Lawrence if he is given to know his peculiarity of temper? Think him particular, replied Mrs. St. John, and carry his conclusions no farther; all this might fit very easy, said Dickson, upon the feelings of any man but a lover; think of that madam—recollect the gratitude you owe him, and then if you

can hold him at a distance! why, Dickson, said the lady, why will you conjure up these tormenting ideas; can I undo what I repeatedly tell you my evil genius has done to distress and mortify me?

In the midst of this discourse an alarm was spread that threw Mrs. St. John into indescrivable terrors, Miss Lawrence was seized with a fever in consequence of her fright, and called loudly for her deliverer to return him her thanks.

CHAP.

CHAP. X.

A SICK CHAMBER.

THE physician and Mr. Jervais were in a moment put to flight, and even vanity itself for a moment expired, in the heart of Mrs. St. John, at this intelligence, she flew (followed by her faithful Dickson,) to the young lady's apartment—and found the melancholy report, alas, too true.

I will not be withheld from seeing him, cried she, from seeing the gentleman

tleman that preserved me from destruction—some one has dispatched him on my account, swords, swords are pointed at his breast—he shall not die, that I may live—O what a return for his goodness to me—my brothers, my father—will no one save him, that saved me, added she in a mournful and softened voice, unless I see him I too shall die.

Mrs. St. John, who was more than half distracted by what she saw and heard, besought her to compose her gentle spirits, all is well said she with us, with the gentleman to whom you are so much obliged; will you then be ill, to distress and afflict us all; unfortunately this was the very string she ought to have left untouched, afflict!

afflict! distress him, cried she, with a loud and shrill voice, I distress and afflict him—let me rather be cut to atoms—let me suffer, if he is but spared, for I can bear every evil and every reproach but that of ingratitude.

O dearest niece, cried Mrs. St. John, out of compassion to me, lower your voice; I took you to the masked ball, Heaven be my witness (pious woman as she was lifting up her eyes to Heaven as she made the asseveration) for your own pleasure and amusement—what was a masked ball to me—but for the delight I imagined it would give you and your brothers, punish me not therefore for a fault (if a fault I must deem it) that originated

solely from tender regard. The gentle Jessy wept upon her aunt's shoulder, who had so much wisdom as not to restrain her tears.

I believe you love me, said she, but let me whisper it in your ear, that to confirm the belief you must bring my deliverer to me; shall we profess and actually feel ourselves happy when we see a common, if agreeable, acquaintance, and have our hearts fly out unbidden, to meet those we call our friends, yet forget what is due to one that ought to be far above acquaintance or friend in our estimation, one that brings his life into hazard, to snatch us from a precipice—O if this kind and wonderful gentleman yet
lives.

lives, bring him to me that I may thank him.

Mrs. St. John was at her wits end, and in vain sought for consolation in the tranquillity of Mrs. Dickson's countenance; the wonted tranquillity of Mrs. Dickson's countenance was totally deranged by her beloved Miss Lawrence's distress, and she intreated (upon her knees intreated) Mrs. St. John would let her fly and fetch Mr. Jervais. If I could hope, said Mrs. St. John, any benefit from his presence to my niece, how gladly would I consent to what you solicit, and yet consider, is not honor more valuable than life, and in this age where is the man that could bear meekly the con-

sequence my niece's anxiety to see him would give.

Dickson was beside herself, I conjure you, dearest madam, said she, by every tie of gratitude and obligation to this sweet creature's father, to leave nothing untried to restore her, he will break his heart, I shall break my heart if she continues much longer in this perilous condition. I want no remembrancer replied Mrs. St. John, coldly, of what I owe my brother, he has had my services if I have had his kindnesses. Use not these killing words, cried Dickson, with all the wildness of despair in her looks, you will never meet with one again to love and honor you as I do, but I will
love

love poor Miss Lawrence also, tho' you was even to forbid my so doing, and will not leave a means within my knowledge or power unexerted to make her easy.

Then you will boldly, I find, said Mrs. St. John, haughtily, introduce into my brother's house, without my sanction or his authority, a young fellow dropped for aught you know from the clouds, nay, not only into his house, but into his daughter's bed chamber, and is this the Dickson I have so long cherished in my bosom—the Dickson, whose company in my retired hours, was so necessary to my happiness, the Dickson I once believed would have died to prove the sincerity

cerity of her attachment to me. Mrs. St. John here paused, but to her equal disappointment and mortification found Mrs. Dickson both unmelted and undismayed. I have never, madam, offended you, said she, or deserved your displeasure, in thought, word, or deed, therefore will not upon this occasion, be moved by unjust reproaches; if you conceive me a mere machine, to be worked at your will, you have greatly mistaken me, had I not always thought you right, I would long since have convinced you I had the courage to tell you I thought you wrong—and I here now solemnly declare, I will return to my cottage in the country, which I have left unoccupied, solely for the pleasure of
passing

passing my time with you, and endeavour to forget I ever knew you.

Mrs. St. John was petrified with astonishment—the all gentle, the all uncontending Dickson, now arming herself at all points against the woman who believed her to be her footstool.

But not knowing what to reply, for she was not to be told that Dickson, though slenderly provided for, had a provision before she had ever joined hands with her, and would, if their friendly union was ever so violently dissolved, began to draw in her horns, (as she mentally phrased it) and at once to disarm poor Dickson's resentment,

sentment, and to relieve her wounded pride—burst out into a flood of tears.

There never was squire upon earth, cried she, so unfortunate a woman as I am, blanch, my little dog and all think they have a right to bark at the fallen Mrs. St. John — for fallen I surely am, from the sister of one of the first merchants in the first city in the whole world; and the wife of a man of fortune and family, to be reduced into a dependent upon Mrs. Dickson's smiles—but go, madam, go to your boasted cottage — and should any kind thought of the woman you leave behind steal across your heart—recollect you have left her involved in wretchedness, from whence,

whence, perhaps, your once friendly hand could extricate her—and then—remember her no more. And thus it was the great Alexander, obtained all his conquests, for by leaving his veterans free to depart, he bound them with a tenfold cord to his interests—therefore, who shall call Mrs. Dickson a weak woman, because her generous and compassionate turn of temper would not permit her to desert her friend in her hour of need.

She wept like a child, on beholding Mrs. St. John's obedient tears; why do we disagree, madam, said she, when our hearts at bottom are the same—you wish to save your niece and I think I know the means, should
my

my method fail of success, may yours, however otherwise directed, answer the desired purpose; Mrs. St. John held out her hand—which Dickson, eagerly kissed in token of renewed amity—and set off with full powers in quest of Mr. Jervais to bring him even into Miss Lawrence's chamber without her father's knowledge, as it was obvious this important reconciliation was not to be bought at a less price.

CHAP.

CHAP. XI.

POOOR Mrs. Dickson had, however such ill success in her embassy—that Mr. Jervais was no where to be found—she wrung her hands in the deepest disconsolation and declared even at the debating club room, she would never return home until she met with him. The people who happened to be well apprised of the consequence Mr. Jervais deemed it to be informed, whenever this woman paid him a visit
—fallied

—fallied forth a second time in search of him—when lo! having traversed streets without number, where should she find him—but in the very street where Mr. Lawrence dwelt, paying his adoration to the pagod which contained the goddess of his adoration, Being, told how earnest Mrs. Dickson (as from description he knew it must be) was to speak to him, his heart caught he knew not what of alarm—should Miss Lawrence—he shot forward like an arrow from a bow, to receive her commands; but all the preparations they could give him was not sufficient to fortify him against the shock of her appearance—her eyes were red with tears, and her dress disordered.

Where-

Wherefore, cried he, breathless with apprehension, wherefore do I behold you thus—Mrs. Dickson, (a ceremony he could have dispensed with) begged he would be seated and she would tell him all.

But in like manner with the young man who told the judge he could give twenty reasons why a witness essential to the support of the cause happened not to be produced in court—and beginning with, “an please you my lord, in the first place, he has been dead these three months—was told not to trouble himself to proceed farther”—when Mrs. Dickson had got it out, that Miss Lawrence was dying, but declared

declared she could not die in peace without thanking Mr. Jervais for his goodness to her—it was unnecessary for her to add another word to complete his despair. Dying, cried he, as soon as he could speak—Miss Lawrence dying—is that the agreeable news I flattered myself you had to tell me—perish every power of that baneful eloquence that opened a way to her destruction—loveliest and most amiable of creatures, shall I never behold thee more. Yes, sir, said Dickson, wiping her eyes—it is for the very purpose of your seeing her once again that I come—Mrs. St. John, herself, begs, as nothing else will satisfy her that without delay, you will attend her—but much, I fear, added the
good

good woman—tears flowing down her cheeks, you will only arrive to see her expire.

Mr. Jervais jumped up—let us be gone, cried he, the torture of suspense is what I am unable to endure.—But an account of his introduction, and its consequences, must be reserved for another chapter.

END OF VOL. I.

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